

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 19 October 2007

Subject: **Regional Housing Board – 5 September 2007**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Housing Board

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

Purpose of Report:

To update the Executive Committee on the work of the Regional Housing Board.

1. Review Day

- 1.1 Our annual review day held in Newbury on 5 September consisted of a workshop session followed by a visit to a local sheltered housing scheme.
- 1.2 The workshop focussed on sustainability, health and the ageing population. We discussed how we can exercise strategic leadership to deliver funding decisions and further close the knowledge gap in the region.
- 1.3 We concluded that the most important actions we can take are to:
 - Understand and influence the cost of achieving higher sustainability standards in new and existing housing
 - Understand the implications of the changing demographic profile and where this may add or increase pressures in particular locations within the region
 - Obtain evidence of changing aspirations and expectations of housing size, type and tenure among those who will reach age 60 during the life of the SE Plan
 - Use our findings to develop a vision of what we are seeking to achieve for older people in the region
 - Explore how the sustainability agenda can be promoted further through our investment in private sector housing
 - Consider lessons to be learned or conveyed from the way the housing stock is occupied
 - Consider the suitability of standards applied to new Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 1.4 These areas and a continuation of our work on supported housing and the role of planning obligations in securing affordable housing without grant will form the basis for our work programme for the next two to three years.

2.0 Board Meeting

- 2.1 I was re-elected as chairman of the Board on 5 September.
- 2.2 In considering the draft update to the Regional Housing Strategy, we agreed a number of changes to the text for clarification and emphasis. In particular it was proposed that a more overt reference should be made to the effectiveness of securing affordable housing through planning obligations. Subject to these amendments, the update was approved for publication. The Board agreed that I should approve any changes required to reflect the Government's announcement of funding allocations. The update is scheduled for publication in late November.
- 2.3 Regarding our proposed investment in a portfolio of brownfield land, we considered additional information to clarify points previously raised. Lengthy discussion generally supported the concept but with continuing concerns about process including criteria for investment. A further report will be made to the Board on 5 December. Without prejudging the outcome of that

meeting, a programme of potential projects will be developed for us to consider in January 2008.

- 2.4 We approved the principles to underpin our forward work programme, agreeing that the priority areas should be those highlighted during our workshop.
- 2.5 We approved a draft outline document to make the region's case for additional public sector investment in the delivery of affordable housing. The document will focus on the costs arising from meeting the current shortfall of affordable housing, the higher level of investment required in social rented housing, the type and size of new housing and the higher environmental standards sought by the Housing Green Paper. It will also point out that additional investment would be needed to deliver the Panel report's recommended increase in the number of affordable homes, especially given that much of the proposed increase is located in the more costly parts of the region.
- 2.6 My last report referred to Government consultation on the formula for the distribution of funds between regions. We are still waiting for the consultation document to be issued. Our "Making the Case" document will form the basis of our response.
- 2.7 Information items on the work of the South East Homelessness Forum, consultation on the Regional Sustainability Framework, the Housing Green Paper and progress of the National Affordable Housing Programme were all noted.
- 2.8 In addition to further consideration of our forward programme and arrangements for investment in brownfield land, the main business of our next meeting on 5 December will be to consider bids from local authorities for private sector housing renewal funds and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.

Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright
Chairman, Regional Housing Board

8th October 2007